

MONTANA'S WETLANDS & YOU - A NATURAL PARTNERSHIP



Montana Is Fortunate To Possess A Wealth And Variety Of Wetlands Within Its Borders

For many years though, wetlands were considered wastelands. The federal government even encouraged draining and filling them. It is estimated that about one-fourth of Montana's wetlands have been lost to agriculture and urbanization.

Today, the essential role wetlands play is recognized. These areas provide crucial wildlife habitat, improved water quality, and flood control. This new knowledge should lead us all to consider wetlands as our natural partners in the effort to keep Montana the "last best place."



Sam Curtis

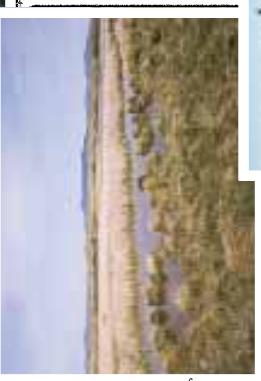
Wetlands, ranching, and farming can successfully coexist.

What can you do to protect and enhance Montana's wetlands?

- ↳ Learn even more about wetlands
- ↳ Preserve or, better yet, increase vegetative buffers around open waters
- ↳ Prevent invasion by noxious weeds and replace with native plants
- ↳ Place bird nesting boxes, snags, stumps, logs and brush piles to create habitat
- ↳ Fence to control over-used trails, livestock areas, and stream banks
- ↳ Prevent entry by off-road vehicles and other forms of heavy recreational use
- ↳ Exclude domestic pets from wetland areas
- ↳ Prevent pollutants from reaching storm drains
- ↳ Remove fill and prevent dumping
- ↳ Delay mowing or haying grassy areas until birds are done nesting



Working With Wetlands



What Kinds Of Wetlands Occur In Montana?

Riverine wetlands are associated with flowing water of rivers and streams. Examples: sloughs, abandoned meanders, and river and creek margins.

Depressional wetlands are low spots on the landscape. Examples: glacial and prairie potholes, saline basins, wet meadows, and ephemeral ponds.

Artificial wetlands are created by human-related activities.

Examples: seeps along irrigation canals.

Lacustrine fringe wetlands are associated with lakes or deep water habitats.

Examples: margins around mud flats, lakes, reservoirs and ponds.

Slope wetlands are groundwater discharge areas on a topographic gradient. Examples: sloping wet meadows, subalpine and montane areas of higher elevation, fens, springs and seeps.

Produced By
Montana Watercourse
P.O. Box 170575
Montana State University
Bozeman, MT 59717
406-994-6671
Funding was provided by the Environmental Protection Agency, Wetlands Grant Program of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

For More Information
Or to request additional materials on wetlands and wetland-related programs available in the state, contact the Montana Watercourse at 406-994-6671.

You may reproduce or copy any portion of this brochure by notifying the Montana Watercourse at the above number. Please acknowledge this publication as the source.

Printed on recycled paper

Copyright. All rights reserved.
Printed in the United States
of America, August 2000

Design by Media Works, Bozeman, MT



Montana the "last best place."

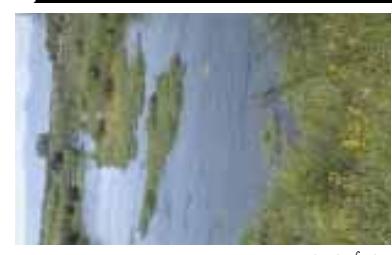
Why Are Wetlands Important?

We now understand the importance of keeping natural wetland systems healthy. Montana's remaining wetlands comprise less than 1% of our total land area.

Though they are small in number, their benefits are many. Wetlands:

Soak up large volumes of water and gradually release it to adjacent streams or water bodies during low flow periods

Recharge wells and aquifers by holding water long enough to allow it to percolate into underlying soil



Terry Lommer

Enhance water quality by absorbing sediments, toxins and nutrients

Decompose organic matter and incorporate nutrients back into the food chain

Provide habitat for millions of birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and amphibians



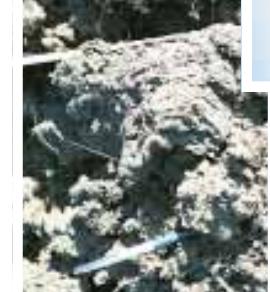
Pete Husby

Do You Have A Wetland?

Do you have a place on your land where you watch ducks or where your tractor seems to always get stuck? If so, you could have a wetland! In wetlands, water is often on or near the surface all or part of the year; the soil is poorly drained and may look gray; and water-tolerant plants such as cottonwoods, willows, cattails, rushes, and sedges may be present. Still, identifying wetlands can be challenging.

What To Look For...?

Generally, three clues are present:



Pete Husby

Hydric soils:
“wet” soils that are poorly drained and develop certain soil characteristics



Pete Husby

wetland hydrology:
water at or near the land surface, all or part of the year



Pete Husby

Protect habitat for threatened and endangered species (in Montana, 39 percent of endangered species are found in or are dependent on wetlands)

If It's A Wetland, It's Wet - Right? Well, Not Exactly.

As you can see, the amount of moisture in a wetland can greatly vary over the course of a year. During some seasons, a wetland may actually be dry.

How Can You Be Sure You Have A Wetland?

If you think your land contains a wetland, check with a wetland specialist. These folks work for agencies like the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) while others are private consultants. Be sure to accompany this person so you can understand exactly where the wetland is and what its characteristics are. The specialist can also give you the names of people you need to contact about projects that might affect the wetland. Most land management practices, building projects, and other actions that occur in or near wetlands require state and/or federal permits.



Dean Vaughan

Hydrophytes:
“water-loving” plants adapted to life in wet soils



Art Today

If It's A Wetland, It's Wet - Right? Well, Not Exactly.

As you can see, the amount of moisture in a wetland can greatly vary over the course of a year. During some seasons, a wetland may actually be dry.

How Can You Be Sure You Have A Wetland?

If you think your land contains a wetland, check with a wetland specialist. These folks work for agencies like the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) while others are private consultants. Be sure to accompany this person so you can understand exactly where the wetland is and what its characteristics are. The specialist can also give you the names of people you need to contact about projects that might affect the wetland. Most land management practices, building projects, and other actions that occur in or near wetlands require state and/or federal permits.



Dean Vaughan

Hydrophytes:
“water-loving” plants adapted to life in wet soils



Art Today